

The theme for our morning worship is “The spiritual peril of denying the truth of God”. In the gospel reading from St. Mark we notice that Jesus had entered a house and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not able to eat. When his family heard about this they went to take charge of him for they said he was out of his mind. Meanwhile, some teachers of the law came from Jerusalem to find out what Jesus was doing. The Scribes were probably sent by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin to investigate whether Capernaum was really beguiled by an itinerant apostate preacher. The scribes had two accusations; that he was demon possessed; and that he cast out demons in collusion with the prince of demons. In fact they said that he was possessed by Beelzebul! ‘By the prince of demons he is driving out demons’ they claimed.

Jesus exposes the fallacy of their argument and said, “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided that house cannot stand and if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.” By saying this Jesus was declaring that he was delivering people from the bondage of Satan by the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore would not be taking the assistance of satanic forces. The logic is that a house divided against it will not stand. The scribes were witnesses to the power of God at work but they were deliberately denying it and attributing it to the power of Satan. Jesus calls this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The sin of blasphemy is the deliberate and persistent rejection of the truth of God. Jesus reveals through his exorcism that he had power and authority over all the forces of darkness. In spite of knowing this fact, the scribes chose to reject it deliberately and persisted in the sin of blasphemy.

In the second reading taken from book of Hebrews the writer tell us if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of truth no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgement and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. The writer shows that if a person has come to the saving knowledge of Christ and then choses to deliberately and persistently to reject Jesus and becomes an apostate, then there is no hope for them except they would face judgment. The provision of access to God through Jesus Christ demands a response: an appropriate response was to ‘draw near to God with a sincere heart and with full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from our guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.’ So we are called to believe in Jesus with a sincere heart knowing that such personal faith will bring about forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. An inappropriate response would be to deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth. The writer warns us that if we deliberately and persistently reject Jesus then we are trampling the Son of God underfoot and have treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified us and that we have insulted the Spirit of grace. In another place the writer say that those who reject Jesus after having known him were crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace (Hebrews 6: 6).

In both these passages God calls us to come with a sincere heart and accept the saving grace of Jesus. Sometimes it is very difficult for us to understand that we are saved by faith in Jesus and by grace alone. On the final day of Judgement it will not be our educational qualification, our riches, the positions we held, or the great discoveries that we made that will matter, but only faith in Jesus. On the other hand we can become like Judas who had known and experienced the truth but deliberately and persistently rejected it and was doomed. May we take this warning about the spiritual peril of denying the truth of God seriously and turn towards him and follow him faithfully all our lives.

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